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12 April 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Wednesday, 12 April 1972, WSAG

1. Participants. Grouped around the high table were Henry Kissinger, U. Alexis Johnson, William Sullivan, Kenneth Rush, Warren Nutter, Admiral Moorer and myself. In addition to [] (who juggled maps for me then left) and a Marine Lieutenant Colonel (who did ditto for Admiral Moorer), ranged around the side were Al Haig, Dick Kennedy, John Negroponte, Fred Karhohs (Major General, USA) and a gentleman with a beard whose name I do not know but who belongs to Kissinger.

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2. Opening Gambits. The proceedings were late and disorganized in starting. Alex Johnson and Sullivan arrived almost on time, followed soon thereafter by Rush, Nutter and Karhohs. Rush was then called out of the room and I suspect he, Moorer and Kissinger were caucusing privately. Eventually (around 1030) Rush returned, with Moorer, soon followed by Al Haig, who suggested we begin without waiting further for Kissinger.

3. Briefings. I led off, sticking basically to the attached text but weaving in some interpolations (cribbed from the Station's excellent reporting) as noted in the margin. I noted the slight pick-up of activity in northern Binh Dinh and made a special point of flagging the signs of enemy preparations to harass Danang airfield, noting that shells or rockets could begin slamming into Danang at any time. (Flagging this proved to be a lucky hunch since the UPI ticker early this afternoon began carrying accounts of an 0130 Vietnam/1230 Washington rocket attack on Danang.) I noted that despite the lugubrious CBS treatment of the An Loc relief column, the relief drive was in fact evolving so far exactly as the 1st Airborne Brigade

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(ARVN) commander had predicted in the 317 report we circulated on 11 April, right down to the estimated time and place of the enemy ambush. (Moorer nodded vigorous assent.) I also cribbed Tom Polgar's useful paragraph on the way the press was overblowing the pressure on FSB Bastogne and the immediate threat to Hue and Phu Bai. (Moorer nodded even more vigorously.)

4. After my spiel, Moorer gave his military rundown. Soon after he started, Kissinger came in. Kissinger did not hear my brief but he did hear Moorer quote approvingly from it several times in a way that clearly showed that the Agency and the JCS were in harmonious accord.

5. Soviet Matters. Kissinger opened the meeting proper by praising McClosky's briefings and general care and feeding of the press in recent days. He indicated, however, that McClosky's use of specific figures for Soviet military and economic aid to North Vietnam (apparently in response to reporters' questions after the 11 April noon briefing at State) had caused some difficulties, including a Marvin Kalb spot on the 11 April CBS News (Cronkite) show on which Kalb asserted that the Soviets had given the North Vietnamese less than a tenth of the aid the U.S. had given the GVN. During the ensuing discussion, Kissinger made it very clear that figures on Soviet aid, particularly ones separating "military" from "economic" aid were not to be publicly used.

6. During the above colloquy, Sullivan essayed a humorous interjection keyed to the Zorza column on the alleged State disagreement with Kissinger and Laird on the Soviets' posture vis-a-vis North Vietnam. It went over with a dull thud. Kissinger rather ponderously and touchily retorted that he had not read the Zorza piece but there was no such inter-governmental split. Soviet matters are clearly not fit topics for levity at this time.

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8. Congressional Climate. Kissinger apparently had spent part of the day helping brief the Republican House and Senate leadership. He noted that the current climate of Congressional opinion on Indochina policy was much more favorable than at any time in recent memory. The fact that the North Vietnamese had crossed an international border with conventional troops apparently had made the difference. Congressional leaders who had been up in arms over protective reaction strikes during Lam Son 719 were now making far more hawkish noises than the Executive Branch. In fact, the White House now had the unusual problem of having to rein in some of its new-found allies who wanted to make public calls for such retaliatory measures as the bombing of Hanoi.

9. The Two Memos. Kissinger then said he wanted to turn to the two "Agency studies" which had been written at his request over the weekend. Rush here interrupted to commend these memoranda with others around the table murmuring assent. I thanked Kissinger and Rush for their comments but immediately observed that these studies had been jointly done with DIA and that we could never have met Dr. Kissinger's deadline without the fine cooperation of General Bennett's colleagues. Moorer beamed.

10. A brief discussion of some of the logistic judgments evolved into the inevitable debate about when the rainy season started and what its effect would be in different parts of the country. This led to a rather lengthy dialogue mostly between Kissinger and myself on Hanoi's overall plans and its possible options should the current offensive not prove successful. Kissinger would like to believe that if the offensive flops, serious negotiations will become the most attractive option for the Vietnamese Communist Party. I argued forcefully but respectfully that this was not necessarily the case. The debate was brisk but good-natured and no umbrage seems to have been taken by anyone participating.

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11. At about 1130 Kissinger said he had to leave and regretted that he had not been able to get around to a detailed discussion of the two memoranda, which he again praised, that he had wanted to have at that meeting. He therefore called another WSAG for 1000 on Thursday, 13 April, for the primary purpose of reviewing these papers. In the process, he virtually apologized for the Monday deadline that had clearly necessitated much weekend work when in fact he would not be able to consider the papers before Thursday.

12. Conversation with Moorer. On the way out I had a very amicable chat with Admiral Moorer. I thanked him for the information Captain Knoizen had provided and he said he strongly endorsed the way we proposed to treat it. He also had some pleasant words to say about the Agency's appraisals and work in general over the past few weeks. Overall, he could not have been more congenial.

George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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Attachment

TS/Sensitive DCI/SAVA Briefing for 12 April WSAG Meeting

O/DCI/SAVA:GACarver, Jr./mee

Distribution

1 - DCI/WSAG file

1 - GAC Chrono

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